

Network of Care

Discussion Document

In an effort to better coordinate the various components of health and social services at the local level, Trilogy Integrated Resources, while consulting with Alameda County and the State of California, created a concept that uses the Internet as a “virtual community”. The concept, which became known as the “Network of Care”, provides critical information on available programs and services to everyone in the community in a simple, fast, and accurate manner. In July 2000, the State of California funded the Network of Care demonstration project for Alameda and Sacramento counties and the two pilot Web sites, focusing on aging and long-term care, were launched in August 2001. One year later, Trilogy replicated the Network of Care for Seniors and People with Disabilities in 12 other counties.

Due to the success and community use of the Web sites on aging and disabilities, interest was generated at both county and state levels for similar, one-stop information sites in other human-services arenas. In October 2002, the California Department of Mental Health, under the direction of Dr. Steven Mayberg, commissioned a similar site to be developed in the area of mental health. San Diego County was chosen as the inaugural location for the Network of Care for Mental Health.

At the same time, the Network of Care for Kids, for children ages 0-5, was commissioned to be developed with the Contra Costa First 5 Children & Families Commission (Proposition 10) and was launched in May 2003. The Fresno County Department of Children & Family Services commissioned the development of the Network of Care for Children & Family Services, for youth ages 0-18, which was launched in September 2003.

The goal of the Network of Care for Mental Health is to help ensure that “No Wrong Door” exists for those who need mental health services. The user-friendly Network of Care for Mental Health Web site provides an extensive directory to put people in touch with the right services at the right time. The site enables consumers and families to find pertinent mental health information, identify available services, supports, and community resources, and keep personal records on secure servers. The site also provides up-to-date information about diagnoses, insurance, advocacy, and daily news from around the world concerning mental health. It is set up so that even new users to the Internet will have an easy time navigating the site and finding the information they want. The features of the Network of Care for Mental Health Web sites include:

- **Service Directory.** This comprehensive database lists local community resources for consumers, caregivers, and service providers. Consumers and families can search the Service Directory in several ways: by age group, diagnosis, program or agency name, key word, or by using the 20-category menu for mental health treatment and supportive services provided by the county and other organizations. The Service Directory is extremely important in enabling people to make greater use of home-and community-based services, so they can stay in their own homes, as independent as possible for as long as possible.

- **Library.** This is an extensive bank of educational information about diseases, conditions, situations, research, and a wide variety of other topics, to help people better understand and handle their own living circumstances.
- **Legislate.** This tool allows users to easily track bills that affect them and communicate directly with lawmakers before they vote.
- **Links.** This link provides access to Web sites for local, state, and national organizations.
- **Insurance.** This link provides information on low-cost insurance and private health insurance programs.
- **Support and Advocacy.** This link provides information on local, state and national organizations that provide assistance, support, information and advocacy to mental health clients, families and service providers.
- **My Folder.** This is an online file that stores users' medical, legal, and financial information so users can access it quickly and share the information with friends and family. This feature also allows the user to make personalized lists of useful agencies, articles, and legislation that they have gathered at Network of Care and save them for quick reference.

The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health cited the Network of Care for Mental Health program as a model program. The Commission, which was established by President George W. Bush in April 2002, identified six goals as the foundation for transforming mental health care in the U.S. As part of its recommendations for achieving Goal 6, the use of technology to access mental health care and information, the Committee proposed the development and implementation of integrated health record and personal health information systems, and cited the Network of Care for Mental Health Program.

The Network of Care for Mental Health Web site currently provides links to sites for 4 California counties: Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Mateo. In its Final Report to the President, the Commission notes that the Network of Care web site can be easily and cost-effectively replicated in any location because the entire infrastructure and many of the data components, like the library and national links, are identical from one region to another. Only certain county specific data, like available mental health treatment and support services, must be developed for each new site.

Resources:

1. "About Us." *Monterey County Network of Care*.
<http://monterey.networkofcare.org/aging/aboutus/index.cfm>. 1 March 2005.
2. "Background." *San Mateo County Network of Care for Mental Health*.
<http://sanmateo.networkofcare.org/mh/aboutus/background.cfm>. 1 March 2005.
3. "President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health: Report to the President: Goal 6." *President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health*.
<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/FinalReport/FullReport-06a.htm>. 1 March 2005.

4. "San Mateo County Mental Health Services Launches Network of Care Web Site." *San Mateo County Health Department*. 1 December 2003.
http://www.smhealth.org/smc/departments/health/home/0,,1954_17490248_106953581,00.html. 1 March 2005.
5. "The Sacramento County Network of Care Project." *Sacramento County Department of Health & Human Services*. 18 June 2002.
<http://www.sacdhhs.com/article.asp?ContentID=199>. 1 March 2005.